



pacific northwest chapter

THE TRAINMASTER

APRIL 1983

NUMBER 251

PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHAPTER
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ROOM 1, UNION STATION
PORTLAND, OREGON 97209
PHONE (503) 226-6747

CHAPTER TIMETABLE

- Friday, April 15 7:30pm Regular monthly meeting of the Pacific Northwest Chapter will be held at the Union Pacific Clubhouse located at the intersection of North Russell and Interstate.
- The program will be a slide show on the Great Northwest Rail Excursion run by the Chapter in October 1982. It will be presented by Ralph Shadd.
- There will also be a newsreel featuring recent slides by Chapter members. NOTE: Recently the six slide limit has been abused greatly. The Program Chairman will enforce the six slide limit and, in addition, requests that the slides be not more than one year old.
- Saturday and Sunday, May 14/15 The Cascades/Deschutes special train being operated for the Chapter by Amtrak will depart Portland at 8:30am and return Sunday evening after spending the evening in Bend. The trip is completely sold out and no more space is available.
- Friday, May 20 7:30pm The regular monthly meeting of the Chapter will be held at the Union Pacific Clubhouse. The program will feature a Southern Pacific black and white promotional film never before shown at any Chapter function.
- Friday, June 17 Annual Chapter picnic. More details in the May issue of the Trainmaster.
- Saturday, Sept 3 All Day Special train over the Oregon California and Eastern Railway. Connections will be available from Portland to include all transportation, connections and hotel. More details in the May issue of the Trainmaster.

SUMMARY OF MINUTES - REGULAR CHAPTER MEETING - MARCH 18, 1983

The meeting was called to order by Chapter President Ben Fredericks at 7:42 PM in the Union Pacific Clubhouse.

Swap Meet: Terry Parker reported that 674 adults and 104 children attended the 1983 swap meet. There was more room in the National Guard armory than in previous locations. The financial outcome of the meet is not yet known.

SP&S Golden Spike Ceremony: John Von Gaertner reported that the weather started out rainy and was a downpour at the time of the ceremonial driving of the golden spike. The Chapter received a lot of good media attention. B.N. officials were favorably impressed with the Chapter's handling of the train and the ceremony. The historical sign at the site of the ceremony is located about two miles west of the Bridge of the Gods. Ben Fredericks advised that Larry Hodson has good video tape of the ceremony. Ben also thanked John, Walt Grande, Mary Lou Weaver and Roger Phillips for their efforts in organizing the ceremony.

SPNW 7117: Ben Fredericks advised that Bill Kratville has been unable to find a suitable car to trade to the S.P. for the 7117. The S.P. has been talking with Ben about two chair cars in exchange for the 7117.

Cascade-Deschutes Excursion: Ed Immel reported that 612 tickets have been sold as of today. The excursion is sold out including one extra car. The train will consist of 10 high level cars plus a lounge car.

Jack Holst Collection: Ben Fredericks reported that the Western Forestry Center has turned down the Chapter's offer of \$750 for the Holst collection. Evidently they had in mind something closer to their \$3000 acquisition cost. John Labbe will keep the Chapter advised in case the Forestry Center decides to negotiate on the price.

Georgia Pacific Museum Display: Terry Parker reported that he has met with the museum curator, Dick Thompson. The display space is not large. Mary Lou Weaver and Duane Cramer will assist with putting together the display. There is not much to be done on the display at present.

Programs: Vice President Duane Cramer requested that members advise him about programs suitable for Chapter meetings. The April program will be a slide presentation by Ralph Schaad. May is open at this time.

President Ben Fredericks announced that a new membership list will be issued soon. He asked that the Chapter secretary be notified about any changes or corrections needed.

New Excursions: Ed Immel announced two possible excursions. Oregon, California & Eastern, Saturday, Sept. 3. This would be an all day trip with five coaches from Klamath Falls to Bly and return. This would be only the second passenger train over the OC&E. The price has not been finalized. Yakima Valley Transportation Co. Ed reported that the wires in Yakima will probably be coming down due to the rebuilding of Knob Hill Blvd. The future of the streetcars is not certain. Freight and passenger operation has been set up for Aug. 20 & 21, 1983.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Chuck Storz, Secretary

WE APOLOGIZE

In the March issue of the Trainmaster we listed those chapter members who have been editors of the club's newsletter. We made a mistake and forgot to list Irving Ewen and Bryan Leeder as having been editors. We regret the omission and can assure them that it was not intentional.

OREGON RAIL ABANDONMENTS

Two short segments of railroad line in Oregon have been quietly abandoned. They include 1.69 miles of line on the Southern Pacific's Westside Line between the branch mainline near Carnation and downtown Forest Grove. The line was once part of SP's famous "Red Electrics" operations as part of the Forest Grove passenger loop.

The last 5.9 miles of track of the Mount Hood Railroad has also been abandoned. There has not been a train movement over this segment of the line since 1980 and the only shipper, Diamond Fruit Growers, no longer ships by rail.

TRAIN ROBBER PAROLED

The last of the infamous De Autremont brothers has been paroled from Oregon State Prison. Roy DeAutremont was the last of the three brothers still in custody 60 years after the Tunnel 13 robbery on the Southern Pacific's Siskiyou Line. The robbery resulted in the deaths of three train crew members and a mail clerk. The robbery in 1923 is considered to be the last real train robbery in the West. Roy had been in bad health and was living in a Salem nursing home.

TRIMET OPENS BIDS FOR FIRST TRACK WORK

Railco Multi Construction of Sherwood, Oregon was the apparent low bidder for the first track work of TriMet's light rail line to Gresham. The company's bid was \$4,308,872 for the two miles between Ruby Junction and Gresham. The tracks will be laid on the right-of-way of the Portland Traction Company.

TriMet has also offered the Portland Traction Company \$2.9 million dollars for its line from Linneman Junction, near SE Powell Blvd, to Gresham. The segment from Linneman Junction to Ruby Junction will not be used for carrying passengers but will afford TriMet a rail connection with the outside world and will also be used to test the new light rail cars rather than tying up the regular passenger line.

TRACK LAY CLASS GETS SPORTS EQUIPMENT FOR SCHOOL

Baker County, Oregon has the highest unemployment rate of any county in Oregon so you can bet that the purchase of equipment for school sports programs is well down the list of priorities.

Baker County is also the home of the revitalized old Sumpter Valley Railroad, said to be the only narrow gauge to have been rebuilt after having been torn out completely for some years. But in its 10 year rebuilding only two miles of track have been completed by volunteer crews. So sixty or more of the youth of Baker Highschool put down one and one-quarter miles of track, stopping only when they ran out of rail in a strickly donated effort. In return the Sumpter Valley backers put receipts from last year's train into a fund to purchase school athletic equipment. The high school coach was right out with the students handling a spike maul and he reports that the students had a great time.

Meanwhile, other residents are backing the project by donating time with various pieces of heavy equipment and with all this effort they hope to link up the present end of track with the county's Dredge Park. Not too many railroads will drop you off at a real life gold dredge any more.

from Observation Platform

A SCORCHING RAIL MUSEUM, 50 MILES LONG

The Gulflander is more than a train - it's a unique outback experience which no visitor of the Gulf of Carpentaria should miss. This relic of northwestern Queensland (Australia) gold mining boom late last centry operates on an isolated 80km railway line between the small towns of Normantown and Croydon, which had a population during the gold rush of around 6,000 people.

Every Wednesday morning the Gulflander, a vintage railmotor hauling one passenger carriage and occasionally a goods wagon - leave the incongruously splendid Normanton railway station, built in 1890 and still the largest and most impressive building in the town, and rattles to Croydon at a top speed of 25 mph. Every Wednesday it comes back - reversing all the way.

The line goes nowhere else, nor does it carry any other kind of traffic. There are no signals and the only collisions are with stray cattle. The driver is also the station master of both Normanton and Croydon, the track inspector, the ticket clerk, mechanic, fitter and turner, and railway paymaster. This means personal attention of an unusual kind for all passengers, as I discovered during a recent journey on the Gulflander. It was a

Saturday morning special arranged by the driver-cum-everything Errol Summerfield (his official Queensland Railways title is officer-in-charge) to take Normanton residents to Croydon's annual rodeo.

"I'm rather keen to see the rodeo myself", he had confided the previous afternoon in one of Normanton's three thriving pubs. "I don't reckon my car will make it there, and so when some people showed interest going there by train, I arranged this special trip." He predicted there would be more than the usual number of passengers, which turned out to be correct - six of us rather than the usual three or four. Errol discovered that the batteries of the rail motor were flat. With typical outback spirit, all the passengers - women included- hopped off to lend a hand. Soon railmotor RM74 was uncoupled from the passenger carriage and we were all pushing it in the direction of Croydon. The engine coughed and sputtered, but stubbornly refused to start, even after we had manhandled it some 30 meters along the track for the third time. One of Errol's assistants was dispatched to fetch a friend with a Land-Rover. The practised ease with which he manoeuvred the vehicle on to the railway line made it clear that he had done this before, and it was not long before the railmotor was throbbing somewhat unevenly with life.

All aboard one more and this time we were off at top speed. It did not take long to discover why the other, ore experience, passengers had chosen to travel in the passenger carriage instead of the railmotor itself, or why the speed limit of 25 mph had been imposed: sitting in RM74 one had to hold desperately as it swayed from side to side with enough force to evict you from the seat. If anything, the noise was worse than the swaying, which made it rather difficult to appreciate Errol's friendly and informative description of the countryside. I did, however, manage to explain that I had been disappointed by not being able to photograph the Gulflander crossing a bridge.

That, Errol assured me, was no problem. Less than 30 minutes later he stopped the train at the end of the bridge over the dry Norman River and told me to take up position outside while he reversed over the bridge to give me a good picture. The rest of the journey would probably be described as uneventful by those who were able to get used to the incredibly loud horn which Errol employed frequently to scare cattle from the railway line.

Croydon station, which we reached after almost five hours, consists of a few corrugated-iron building and came as an anticlimax after its counterpart at Normanton. But the town, which was founded during the gold rush of 1885, has a number of historically interesting buildings which have been classified by the National Trust, and plenty of cold beer to revive weary

travelers.

Of course, the Gulflander is not kept operating at a cost of more than \$100,000 a year merely to save a few passengers the drive between towns. It carries freight such as stock feed to farmers in the area, and during the Big Wet - usually from November to April- it is often the only link between Normanton and the outside world. Floodwaters usually close the railway line for eight or nine weeks during the summer, but is ready for use almost immediately after the waters subside, although the roads remain unusable for long periods. The railroad's income during the Wet is 250 percent higher than in the winter

But to the tourist, the Gulflander offers more than merely the thrill of travelling on one of the world's more unusual railroads. Its very isolation has given it a special sense of history, which fascinates railway enthusiasts and is of interest even to casual visitors.

Because it is not connected with the Australian railways systems, the locomotives and railway stock shipped to the railway during close on 100 years have remained there, for it is too expensive to transport them elsewhere when they became obsolete. Instead, they were shunted behind the Normanton station or on to sidings. There the remains of the A10 class steam locomotive 202, built in 1877 and sent by sea to Normanton when the line opened in 1890, and the chassis of two other similar locomotives are behind the Normanton station, with trees now growing where the drivers once stood.

The first railmotor, a 24 hp Panhard, was introduced in 1922, when the gold ran out and the railway was already in decline, and is now preserved in the Railway Museum at Redbank, near Brisbane. But all its successors remain on the Normanton-Croydon line in various states of repair, together with carriages, freight wagons and other bits and pieces that make up a railway.

Finding these relics and allowing them to transport you into the past is as exciting as the Gulflander journey itself. Together they make an unforgettable experience.

Nic Van Oudtshoorn

MOUNT HOOD CIRCLE USA TRIP

Plans have been made to take the Mt. Hood around the United States during September of this year. This was announced in the Trainmaster last year and the mailings have gone out to those that have already signed up. These will be given first choice on the available space. The trip will leave Portland on Wednesday September 7th and will return to Portland Sunday morning

September 25th. The car will leave Portland on Wednesday Orleans, Washington, DC, Philadelphia, Chicago and Spokane. The trip will include all meals while moving and breakfast while on services at stop-over cities. All cooking will be done by a professional railroad chef. The total cost for the trip will be \$1,275 per person. Due to the long period passengers will be on the train there will be no sale of double occupancy roomettes. Passengers that are interested in going should send a \$300 non-refundable deposit to the Room 1 address. If not enough deposits have been received by May the 15th the trip will be cancelled and deposits returned. The deposit limits and time constraints have been set to guarantee that the trip will operate since it is extremely time consuming to plan such an operation.

IMPORTANT MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Membership Chairman John Holloway states that this is the final notice for membership dues for 1983. Please send your dues as soon as possible as we are in the process of updating our membership list for 1983. If dues are not received by the end of April 1983 you will be dropped from the membership list and Trainmaster mailing list. If you have any corrections such as address, phone number, ZIP code, name spelling etc please let us know as soon as possible. If you wish not to have your phone number or address listed on the Chapter's membership list which will be published in September. For those of you who have already paid your 1983 dues - thank you. Your membership card will be mailed as soon as they are received from the National.

COLD SPIKE CELEBRATION

It was just one of those projects that got out of control. That is probably the best way to describe the celebration surrounding the 75th anniversary of the completion of the Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railway.

It all started when Wall Grande got word that the Skamania County Historical Society wanted to know if the Chapter would be interested in participating in their roadside sign program and help in paying for a sign to mark the completion of the SP&S at Sheridan's Point. The original contact was made the first part of the year and there did not seem to be any real time limit attached to it. Shortly, it was discovered that 1983 would be the 75th anniversary of the completion and that date was March 11th. The project was shifted into high gear as Ben Fredericks contacted the Kim Foreman of the Burlington Northern in Seattle to see if the BN would like to participate. Kim said that he would try to find out what level of interest the BN had in the

project. It was at this point that one thing just lead to another as a simple sign unveiling ceremony turned into a bunch of speeches, a community gathering with a free lunch, school buses, cannons and a special train from Vancouver to Stevenson.

Joining in with the Chapter was the Burlington Northern Veterans Association and the Skamania County Historical Society and the Burlington Northern Railroad. The sparkplug for the BN Veterans was John Melonas who as assistant to the vice-president of SP&S was very instrumental in making the Pacific Northwest Chapter as successful as it is today. The Chapter's committee members were Ben Fredericks, Walt Grande, John von Gaertner, Mary Lou Weaver and Roger Phillips. John was to serve as committee chairman.

Rather than attempt to have the ceremony on a weekday, it was decided to have the celebration on Saturday, March 12th rather than Friday the 11th. This would encourage participation by Chapter members and the general public. As it turned out, it also encouraged the participation of that great trait of Northwest weather --rain and lots of it.

The Burlington Northern special train sat ready at the Vancouver station with engine 2716 on the point followed by the Chapter's private car Mt. Hood (ex-SP&S), followed by the BN's Mississippi River, two ex-GN coaches and then the Columbia River bringing up the markers with its rear platform adorned with an appropriate drumhead sign. The train was quite a contrast to the regular Amtrak trains that use the station what with the Mt. Hood's Daylight colors, one BN business car in stainless steel and the others in BN's green and white colors.

At exactly 9:30am the special departed with about 160 passengers and guests aboard. There were the usual motorcadgers but the pouring down rain reduced their participation. Hot coffee and hundreds of old railroad stories flowed on the train as the engine had the short special up to track speed in a few miles. The time went all to fast as the train arrived at the Stevenson depot at 10:30am where the passengers transfered to school buses for the trip to the dedication site just off Washington Highway #14 near the town of North Bonneville.

The rain reduced the speeches to just a few and then the crowd went to a bluff overlooking the BN mainline. The last SP&S vice-president and general N.S. "Jim" Westergard took part in an reenactment of the driving of the last spike with the able assistance of Sandy Oslund, Lindy Fredericks, Rachel Immel and Mary Lou Weaver dressed in period costumes. Shortly a BN freight appeared from the east and as the crowd watched, broke through a banner stating this was the 75th anniversary.

The rain by this time has got everyone pretty soaked and without



Above: Burlington Northern Gold Spike S. P. & S. 75th Anniversary Special consisting of BN GP35-2 2716, PNW 600 sleeper-lounge "Mt. Hood" (ex-S. P. & S.), BN business car "Mississippi River", BN coaches A-14 and A-13, and BN business car "Columbia River" awaits departure from the Vancouver, Washington depot, March 12, 1983.
Below: Special drum head prepared by Alex Ceres.





Above: Westbound Burlington Northern train #373 crashes through a 75th anniversary banner near mile post 50 at Sheridans Point, Washington. Below Carolyn Bajema, President Skamania County Historical Society, John Melonas, President Portland Chapter Burlington Northern Veterans Association, Mrs. J. B. Stanton (who's husband was the last General Manager of the S. P. & S. before the BN merger), and Ben Fredericks, President Pacific Northwest Chapter, National Railway Historical Society stand in front of the just unveiled highway marker commmerating the driving of the Golden Spike, March 11, 1908.



a great deal of argument the party quickly boarded the school buses for the short trip to the Rock Creek Recreation Center where a free lunch was served by the community and the actual speeches took place. During lunch the participants were entertained by local musicians. As the last SP&S vice-president/general manager, Jim Westergard's remarks about his days with the railroad were touched with a great deal of sentiment as he recalled that he knew almost everyone on the railroad by their first name and that they were all one big family. He remarked that problems could be expected by the SP&S since the railroad was the bastard child of two parents (NP&GN) who never bothered getting married until 1970.

By the time the last remarks were made by William Francis, Vice-president and general manager BN, the rain had stopped and the sun came out. Passengers trooped back on to the buses for the short trip to the Stevenson Depot and the special train to Vancouver. The ride back was over all too fast and the sun shone on the magnificent scenery in the Columbia Gorge. Several remarked that it was just like having dinner in the diner of the Streamliner after having a drink in the Mt. Hood. The SP&S was a fine railroad that could truly call itself "the Northwest's own Railway".

The Burlington Northern Railroad is to be congratulated for allowing a bit of its former self be the star for the day. After all, to appreciate the role you play today one is always uplifted by the role their parents played in the past.

As a matter of interest - from all the photos taken of the original event, the weather appears to be just about what was experienced 75 years later. However, instead of large box cameras, the event was covered by all of the television stations in Portland with their fancy video tape cameras.

The sign at the site covers the event that took place there on March 11, 1908. A special 10-car train with 500 guests left Portland and Vancouver with locomotive 494 in charge. Engineer was C.O. Frykholm and J.A. Buckley as conductor. After speeches, the golden spike was driven while guests cheered and the Third Calvary Band from Fort Vancouver played. The sign also covers the role James J. Hill played in the development of the Northwest and the fact that the SP&S was important in the history of Skamania County. On March 2, 1970 the SP&S became a part of the Burlington Northern System. At the bottom are the emblems of the NRHS, Washington DOT, BN and Skamania County.

Ed Immel

Photos to accompany this article were taken by Jim Whaley.

NO MORE TROLLEYS FOR YAKIMA?

Electric railroading enthusiasts who put off visiting the Yakima Valley Transportation Company would be well advised to see it in 1983. The franchise for this 75 year-old survivor from the interurban era expires in April, and there is much public sentiment in Yakima against renewing it.

The main bone of contention is the trackage along Nob Hill Boulevard. Widening of the overbusy thoroughfare is hampered by YVT's trackage along its northside. The railroad has looked into the possibility of relocating its trackage on a more southerly route near the Yakima Airport. The cost of acquiring right-of-way, laying new tracks and stringing up new overhead wire has been deemed prohibitive when it was considered in the past.

This year, however, YVT has come up with a new twist. Beginning possibly as early as March or April, YVT will be testing a diesel locomotive. The tight curves of YVT's line pose a real problem for the stiffer diesel locomotives rather than the more limber electric engines. In its announcement of its intent to test diesels, the YVT noted that one form they would be testing would be a rubber-tired vehicle which would be able to move on pavement as well as rail. Presumably this would also sidestep the tight curve problem that abounds on the railroad and has prevented the introduction of diesel engines in the past.

If the railroad should survive beyond 1983, but become de-electrified, there is one plan afoot to preserve the electrification west of Wide Hollow Junction and move the present car barn for the trolley cars to that point. This would allow some operation of the two reconstructed Brill cars imported in 1974 from Portugal. The railroad has made no comment so far on this plan.

With the possibility of drastic imminent changes on the YVT, therefore, it seems a visit to the apple country interurban would be in order. It could be the last chance to see 60-year old steeple cab electrics trundling down the middle of streets that look much the way they did in the heyday of electric railroading. Perhaps the very fortunate will catch a glimpse of 74-year old line car Number A, the oldest operating locomotive in the employ of a class I railroad (YVT parent is Union Pacific) in the United States.

In each of its two previous franchise renewal ordeals (1946 and 1973) the YVT has had to make concessions. In 1946 the eastern half of the railroad was completely amputated. In 1973 the allowable operating hours were curtailed and the franchise term was cut to ten years. In 1983 more concessions look likely, perhaps the demise of the entire railroad.

Ken Johnson, Tacoma Chapter, Trainsheet

LATE NEWS FLASH ---MEMBERS WHO HAVE PAID THEIR 1983 DUES SHOULD IGNORE THE NOTICE IN VOLUME 48 ISSUE #1 of the BULLETIN REGARDING "This is your last issue".

PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHAPTER

NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

(An Oregon Non-Profit Corporation)

Room 1, Union Station, 800 NW 6th Ave.
Portland, OR 97209 (503) 226-6747

1983 CHAPTER OFFICERS

President		Director-at-Large	
BEN FREDERICKS	(503) 256-4503	KEN A ARMSTRONG	(503) 654-1723
16531 N E Hoyt Street		2847 S E Malcolm Street	
Portland, OR 97230		Milwaukie, OR 97222	
Vice President		Director-at-Large	
DUANE CRAMER	(206) 573-0672	RANDLE ("PETE") DORLAND	659-1274
2618 N W 113th Street		14884 S E River Road	
Vancouver, WA 98665		Milwaukie, OR 97222	
Secretary		Director-at-Large	
CHARLES W STORZ JR.	(503) 289-4529	IRVING G EWEN	232-2441
146 N E Bryant Street		2215 S E 37th Avenue	
Portland, OR 97211		Portland, OR 97214	
Treasurer		Director-at-Large	
LAWRENCE J MILLER	640-4810	JAMES W SCHMIDT	353-4196
3629 S E Paula-Jean Court		13525 S E Mill Street	
Hillsboro, OR 97123		Portland, OR 97233	
Chapter National Director			
ROGER W SACKETT	244-4619		
3639 S W Cullen Boulevard			
Portland, OR 97221			

Chief Mechanical Officer - Gary S. Oslund 287-4869

Director of Special Projects - Edward E. Immel 233-9706

Historian - Walter R. Grande 246-3254

Membership Chairman - John D. Holloway 246-5752

PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the National Railway Historical Society and the Pacific Northwest Chapter is open to all persons 16 years of age and over who are interested in railroads and railroad history. Dues for the Pacific Northwest Chapter are \$16.50 a year. Membership includes six issues of the NRHS Bulletin (national publication) and nine issues of the Pacific Northwest Chapter's publication The Trainmaster. The Pacific Northwest Chapter meets on the third Friday of the month except during July, August and December. Meeting location and time are given in the monthly issues of The Trainmaster. Write to the Pacific Northwest Chapter at the address at the top of this page for an application or for more detailed information.

APRIL 1983

THE TRAINMASTER STAFF

EDITOR

Edward E Immel (503) 233-9706
715 S E Lexington Street
Portland, OR 97202

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CIRCULATION MANAGER

Charles W Storz Jr. 289-4529
146 N E Bryant Street
Portland, OR 97211

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